

THE LURE OF NEW YORK

BY ALLAN L. BENSON

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To ride into New York on a freight train is a heinous offense. The law says so. Railroad companies suggested the law and secured its enactment. They prefer to handle their passenger traffic in the regular way. Fares cannot so easily be collected from passengers who are secreted around the trucks. Besides, freight train travelers have gained the reputation of being uncertain persons. They sometimes steal small things that rich persons would not think of stealing. Yet, against them as the law is, patrons of the box-cars pour into New York at all seasons of the year.

An Ohio boy, one morning last winter, was in court for beating his way into the metropolis. He was only sixteen years old, and rather small for his age. His coat fitted him a little too soon and ankle-grease was on it. Hadn't had time to slick up since he was pulled from the trucks. Still, he was cheerful. Answered the court's questions as if it were a pleasure. Told all about the folks at home, and why he left home.

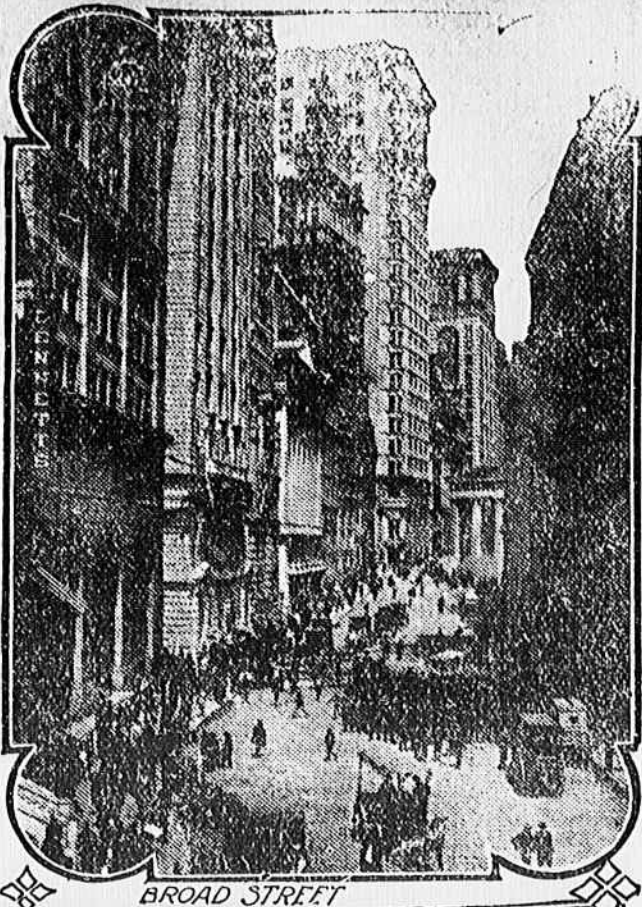
He and another boy craved the big life. They wanted to be in the midst of something and be something. Only, the other boy had a little hitch to his ambitions. He wanted to go to Chicago, where he had an aunt who, in an emergency, might be induced to provide food.

The boy who stood before the Honor waved his comrade away.

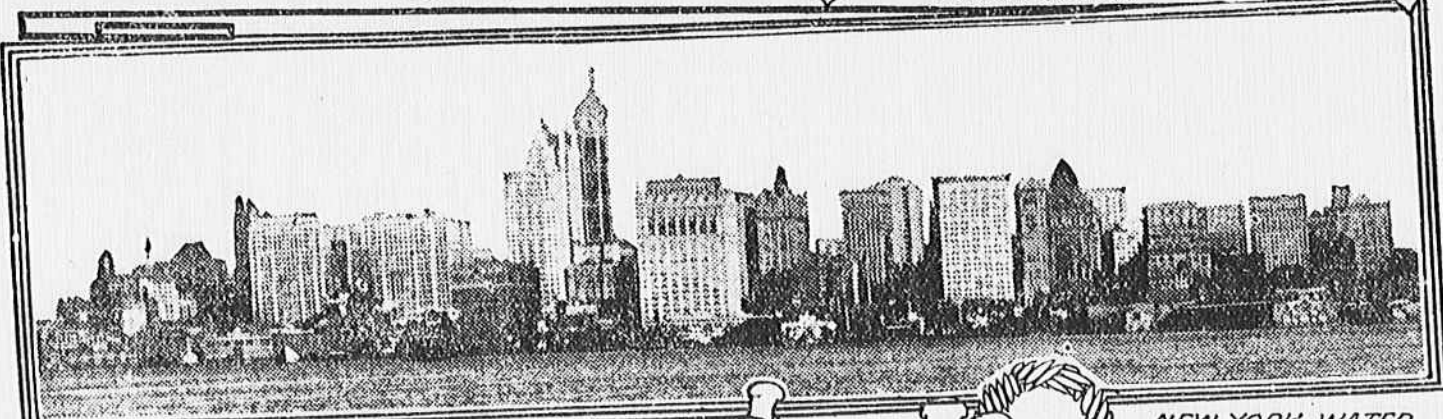
"I told my chum," he said, "that I would rather be in New York, broke and hungry, than be in Chicago with a



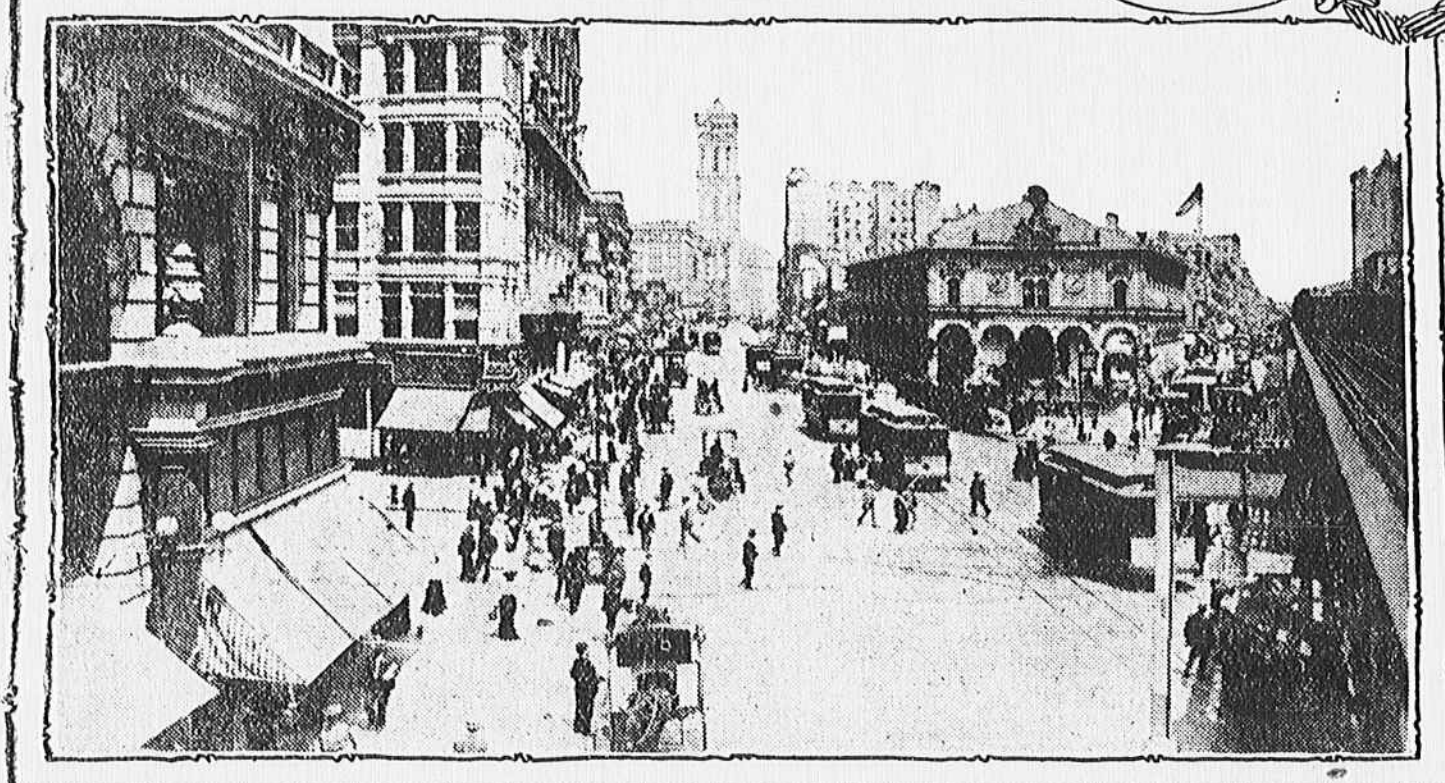
THE GREAT WHITE WAY



BROAD STREET



NEW YORK WATER FRONT, FROM JERSEY CITY



HERALD SQUARE

meal ticket at every restaurant. I left my chum right there. I paid my fare as far as I could and beat it the rest of the way."

The court, some years back, having broken into town in substantially the same way, did not hear the boy's story without feeling. During the recital, the judicial mind had gone back to that other day, now long gone, when he, a penniless lad, had said good-by to his native town. So he said to the boy:

"My son, let me commend your judgment. Any boy who will ride the trucks to New York, in preference to going to Chicago and living with his chum's aunt, has the right spirit. I think this town needs boys like you, and I am going to let you stay. Discharged."

Nothing can illustrate better than this incident the lure of New York. Perhaps no other city ever had so large a percentage of the world's population bluffed. A bigger word than "bluffed" is needed here, but it does not come. The point is that the city has the power to cast a great spell, and casts it. She makes no comparisons. To make comparisons would be to admit that there are others in her class. She says only: "I am the wonderful city—come."

The call goes north to the edge of the frozen world; east to the point where the east is west; south as far as a white man lives, and west till the west is east. Not everybody comes, but everybody hears. Millions would like to come, but can't. Everybody would like at least to see the siren city. And, untold thousands do come. One railroad thinks nothing of dumping 100,000 strangers into New York in a day.

The reason for so much coming is plain. Everybody likes to be mixed up with a success. The bigger the success, the better. New York is universally regarded as a big success. It has the tallest buildings, the richest men, the whitest "White Way" that ever cut a streak through the night, and some of the most prodigal disbursers of the circulating medium that ever dazzled any community.

In a variety of ways comes the message to mix with this great success—to become a part of this wonderful bigness. Perhaps the newspapers and the stage do the most to spread the lure. New York date-lines appear over the most important items of news. There seems to be only one place in which anything worth while can happen. Has Mr. Morgan bought an old master or formed a new trust? Where did he do it? New York. Has Mr. Rockefeller paid his annual visit to the office of Standard Oil? Yes—a New York dispatch says so. Has Mr. Carnegie slipped in the icy park and sprained his ankle? What park? Why, Central Park, in New York, of course. And, whenever an Italian opera singer, a Russian revolutionist, or an Irish patriot comes to this country, where does he land? At New York. What city reads out the news? New York.

As an advertiser of the glories and splendor of this great town, the stage is second only to the

Twenty years ago, a Nevada youth went to see a show in Carson City. The show was that old

classic, "The Two Orphans." In the cast were extremely few persons besides the orphans themselves, as railway transportation and board were both high. But the show made up in scenery what it lacked in cast. One scene, in particular, appealed to the chuckle-faced youth. It was a scene in which the two orphans were sitting on the steps of Trinity church. The snow was drifting down over their thin shoulders. Broadway was thronged with pedestrians. Horse-cars flew along at eight miles an hour. Nobody looked at the orphans. But the orphans, silent as little sphinxes, looked straight ahead—straight up the street. There was Broadway! The infinite skill of the scene painter seemed to have carried the street clear to the horizon. Nothing but buildings and people and people and buildings till they blended, at the finish, into an indistinguishable haze of paint.

The Nevada youth could hardly keep his seat. The painted scene had fired his mind with an intense desire. He must be off to New York. All during the show, which he saw not, though he looked straight at the stage, he kept his eyes riveted to the splendid vista of Broadway. The whole thoroughfare seemed to him to be a treasure-house of opportunity. And, at dusk, when the lights begin to blaze up along the "Great White Way"—ah, it is all just as he had dreamed it to be! All grand! All surpassingly great!

But, kind friends, he dines at no lobster palace that evening. Nor do his magnificent jewels glitter in the "horseshoe crescent" at the opera. With the money that he can spare for his evening meal, he couldn't buy a lobster's tail, and a drygoods box in an alley would fit him better than a box at the opera. So, he dines poorly for sixty cents at a side-street restaurant, gets a glassy eye from the waiter for not giving a tip, finds a room in which there is no light by day, nor pure air night or day—and goes to sleep to dream of home and mother.

The next morning, he is awakened by a miscellaneous assortment of noises, ranging from elevated car wheels to horses' hoofs. As he puts on the shirt that mother laundered for him, his heart takes a sudden lurch back to the old roof. He calls his heart back. He is in New York to make good. It is up to him to do it. And, by the time he is ready to go out to hunt for breakfast, his nerve is all back.

With nothing to do but get a job or starve, he looks for work. He hears that motormen are wanted on the subway. Half afraid to offer his services, he nevertheless decides to do so. On the way to the company's offices, he considers all of the situation's glorious possibilities. Never in the country did he dare dream that some day he might make a battery of motors bite off 2,000 horsepower of electricity and snatch eight loaded cars through the subterranean night.

The good news goes home to the old folks that their boy is going to run a train in the New York subway. Oh, if the boy could only see the mingled sorrow and pride that light up his mother's eyes when she reads the letter. It breaks her heart to have her boy away, but it mends it to know how emphatically he has made good in the

big town. Going to run a train driven by electricity! Going to run a train bearing fifteen hundred human beings, each of whom has put his life, for a time, in her son's keeping! Such confidence as the company must have had in her boy to trust him with so grave a responsibility. Oh, it is such a comfort to her to know that her son, whom she has loved since she felt his first heart-beat; for whom she has toiled and suffered and denied herself—it is such a comfort to her to know that he has been recognized at what she knows to be his true worth, by the most wonderful city in the world.

A year later, what rejoicing there was in the little home when the boy wrote that he was coming back on a vacation. Mother could hardly read the letter, she was so excited. Ran to the fields to tell father. Ran back to get dinner. Could hardly cook—burned the eggs to a crisp, something she had not done

in thirty years, and had to fry some more. In such a hurry to put on her "other dress" and run over to Mrs. Pratt's to tell her: "My boy is coming home."

The boy came home. When he took mother in his arms and held her for a full minute, she couldn't speak. All choked up. So glad to see him, she couldn't say a word. And, when she did speak, the first thing she said, as she looked up into his brown eyes, was: "Oh, my boy, how pale you are!"

He was pale. He knew it. Subway air makes no red blood-corpuscles. Kills some of the red ones that exist. Nor does the electric light of the subway brown the cheek as the sunlight browns the cheek of the farmer. All the year that he had been away, mother had carried in her mind the picture of her farmer boy. Never had dreamed that her farmer boy would come home with a grayish-white face. Didn't need to say she was shocked. Looked it. The boy caught the message and laughingly replied:

"Oh, mother, all city folks are pale." During the week that he remained at home, the boy was kept talking. Father and mother constantly asking questions. Seemed to mother as if she couldn't ask questions enough. Wanted to get first-hand information about everything of which she had read.

Six months after he returned to work, his mother had an opportunity to see for herself, just how big was New York. A telegram told her that her boy had been hurt. She and father found him in a hospital, with his head bandaged until they could barely see his eyes. At the end of his run, he had tried to cross the tracks to catch another train back and get to dinner more quickly. Didn't see a train running in the opposite direction. Car struck him. Picked up for dead. Seemed to have a fractured skull. Fortunately, did not. Revived in the hospital and would get well.

Oh, but the mother's heart was glad when she heard the best instead of the worst. Glad until she and father went to the boy's room. Not his room in the hospital, but his room in a lodging-house. Glad until she saw how miserably he had lived. A dirty street. A dirty house. A dirty hall. A cheerless room. Little light. Bad air. A skimp bed. A frayed counterpane. Not a decoration, save her own picture, stuck in the edge of a mirror.

Her boy could afford no better place to live. His pay was only \$2.25 a day. That is his pay from the company was only \$2.25 a day. The lure of New York made up the rest that was needed to induce him to stay.

Such is life for millions in New York. Not life as the newspaper dispatches describe it. Not life as the stage pictures it. Life as it is.

A few draw colossal prizes. A few more draw good prizes. But if only those should come to New York who can earn a better living here than they can elsewhere, a handcar, running once a day, would almost bring them in. Ninety-two per cent. of the population have not enough prizes to enable them to own their own homes. Yet people come. Come from every state in the Union. Come from every town in every state—every hamlet. Come from Italy, Norway, Sweden, Turkey—come from everywhere.

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CC 68

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Thousands of ladies write that Cardui helped them, right from the start.

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Owens—You can indeed, madam; everybody trusts me.

If a dose of Hamlin's Wizard Oil taken at night will prevent your having a bad cold in the morning, isn't it a good idea to have it ready to take the moment you feel the cold coming?

Harsh.

Gerald—Coffee keeps me awake.

Geraldine—Me, too; I always drink an extra cup when I know you are coming to call.

For COLDS and GRIP

Hicks' CARBOLINE is the best remedy—relieves the aching and feverishness—cures the Cough and restores normal conditions. It's liquid—effects immediately. 10c, 25c, and 50c. At drug stores.

You cannot step twice into the same stream, for as you are stepping in, other, and yet other, waters flow on.—Heraclitus.

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Apply only from Aseptic Tubes to Prevent Infection. Murine Eye Salve in Tubes—New Size 25c. Murine Eye Liquid 25c-50c. Eye Books in each Pkg.

Poverty is by common consent an admirable training for mental and moral perfection—in others.—Finley.

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